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University Libraries and Their Users in a Changing Environment

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Content

- The Digital Library and User Needs: evaluation and experiences
- Some Trends
- New roles of the university library
- Conclusion



Gradual move to the Digital Library

- In 70s and 80s focused on back office activities (more efficiency and staff savings)
- Online Catalogue first user oriented IT service in libraries
- In 1989 launch of first Digital Library project in Europe (Tilburg University)



The Digital Library concept: User driven?

- New technology and vision of library leaders were driving force, not user demands: We expected that this would be needed and that users would love it
- Support from some university boards, governments, European Commission
- Choices were user oriented



Characteristics of the Digital Library approach

- Library in the Centre of the concept
- Libraries started to make “their” information available online
- Gradual move towards virtual library
- Access to electronic information is no longer connected with THE library



User experiences

- Use of (electronic) information has increased tremendously
- Libraries did not become Museums but lively Study Centres; there is still a very important role for “the library as a place”
- Users always want more: studyplaces, Internet Cafes, online resources, faster network etc.



Major changes in the past 10 years

- Access over the network from anywhere and at any time
- Move to virtual collections, move from ownership to access
- E-journals have become “the rule”
- Direct E-communication between authors and readers creates new opportunities and models
- Increasing power of the user



University Libraries in Europe: some trends

- Less government money to culture and education
- Interests in “skills” and “needs-based” education
- Increasing interest of governments and universities in E-learning, E-publishing and E-science
- More competition AND more cooperation



Other trends in education and learning

- Growing demand for life long education tailored to the needs of learners
- More flexibility in how, when and where we learn: customization



Trends in E-publishing

- University Libraries are supporting their students and researchers in the E-publishing process for teaching and research
- University output on the Web, but organised, well selected and properly (linking, interoperability)



Various types of users, different demands

- Significant differences between needs of undergraduates and graduates
- Differences between young researchers and professors with established reputation
- Differences between subject areas
- Various approaches and services for various users are required



Two types of university libraries or two functions

- **“Undergraduate Library”:**
 - electronic is the rule;
 - E-Learning centre
 - important social function
- **“Graduate Library”:**
 - Print and electronic
 - Centre for study and research



Major changes within 15 years

- In the 80s: **Collection oriented**
- In the 90s: more **Service oriented**
- At present: more **Customer oriented**



Challenges for Universities and Libraries

- **More co-operative activities** between universities nationally and across borders on E-Learning, E-Publishing and Open Archives: common infrastructure and tools; content, quality of people and quality of the place will make the difference
- **Personalised portals** for individuals and groups focused on course information, research information and management information.



New roles of the university library

- Major task in organizing the information environment of the university
- Teaching role (information literacy)
- Role in Electronic Learning and Distance Learning (as part of a team)
- E-Publishing support
- Profiling and Customization of information (connected with trends in teaching, learning, research and business)



Conclusions

- More integration within the university
- More cooperation between universities on licenses, tools, IT infrastructure and E-archiving
- Libraries will have a (bright) future if they can continue to provide added value